

+RESILIENT- Mediterranean Open RESouRcEs for Social Innovation of SocialLy Responsive ENTerprises

Policy brief
**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TREVISO
 BELLUNO**

D.6.2.1 capitalization brief and primers



Project partners



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Executive summary

The following policy brief is the result of the pilot action carried out by the Chamber of commerce of Treviso Belluno in the frame of the +Resilient project focusing on the enhancement of the social responsibility for tourist operators and in general for the tourism ecosystem.

Action carried out by the Chamber of Commerce of Treviso Belluno focused on the specific mountain areas of reference (Belluno Province – Veneto Region – Italy) and aimed at supporting economic operators, public and private stakeholders and SMEs working on tourism or dealing with this sector to define an appropriate model of cooperation able to trigger and enhance social responsibility both to include disadvantage people into the economic sector and offer better services to the clients.

As result of the pilot action a model of cooperation has been drafted and a guideline on how to enhance social responsibility for a smart and sustainable tourism has been produced and disseminated.

The brief summaries the main outcomes of the pilot and is addressed both to local and regional policy makers.

Introduction

In 2017, Belluno Province developed a local marketing strategy that defined the strategy for the forthcoming years. Even if the COVID-19 changed the scenarios, the main conclusion is still important for this document:

The Province of Belluno: one organized, competitive, international and sustainable tourist eco-destination.

When talking about “sustainable”, the following indication are given: the combination of economic interests, environmental protection and citizens and mountain traditions valorization.

With this approach, the social dimension is naturally included and the aim of this document is to further expand the topic, addressing specific actions to entrepreneurs, public and private tourist stakeholders.

Social innovation solutions in tourism represent an important developmental factor, due to their influence on the transformation of the “customer oriented” perspective into the “community oriented” which includes social capital of the community. It is about an important competitive challenge for regions and countries. To ensure environments that enable the development of prosperous businesses and start-up companies all stakeholders should focus on better care for the working environment and the rules of the game, and less on the process.

Overview of the research/problem

Tourism as a complex phenomenon has an important role in social and economic development. The progress of tourism in a certain destination includes a multi stakeholder for which it presents a source of economic and social progress and a cause of negative effects at a social, environmental and economic level (Carlisle et al., 2012). This is the reason why the tourism industry should be paid attention in order to ensure sustainable growth, which is represented by the establishment of the innovative environment, which ensures tourism entrepreneurial projects that do not present value added only for the tourist, but also for all the local stakeholders.

The following table indicates the positioning of social innovation in tourism within customers (tourists), local community, government, profit organizations, non-profit sector and in the spaces between them.

Stakeholders	Value propositions	Working models based on outdated processes	Post-industrial business model solutions
Tourist	Cognition of locals life background, Leisure	Nature landscape, Travel experiences, Hospitality	Low carbon, Tourism and Hospitality,
Community	Bridging social divides, Equal life standards, Quality of infrastructure	Tourism industry, Community interactions, Public transportation, Traditional education, Traditional culture	Senior citizens reemployment, Life after retirement, Healthy community, Characteristic education system, Culture inheritance
Profit Organizations	Social capital, Lower taxes for creation of new work places, Profit	Cost revenue	Human capital, Corporate social responsibility, Long-term profit
Non-profit sector	Social capital, Revenues from public sources, Revenues from sales of goods and services, Donations	Knowledge transfer	Internet platforms, Social entrepreneurship, Social enterprises
Government	Compliance (taxes), higher rate of employment, GDP growth	Political system, economic politics	Economic development, Tax revenue, Natural land scape protection

Source: author's adaptation according to Peng, K. L. and Lin, P. M. (2016). Social entrepreneurs: Innovating rural tourism through the activism of service science, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 28, No. 6, pp. 1225-1244.

As visible in the previous table, for the stakeholders in the local community, it is

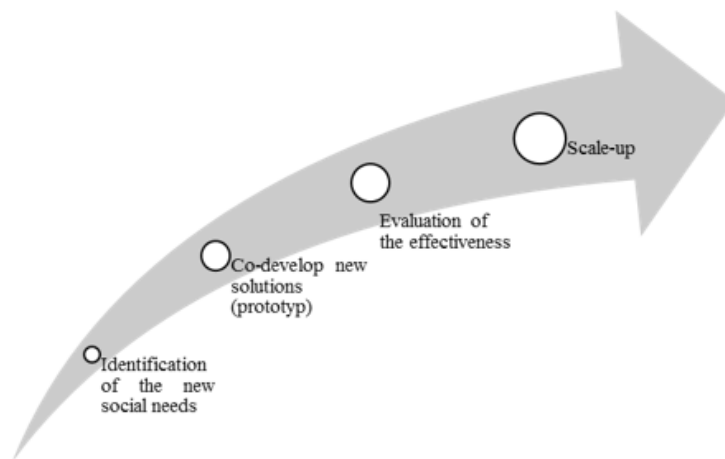
influential that new post-industrial business models are implemented in the community, which are built on social entrepreneurship, internet technologies, environmental protection, sustainable tax policies, intellectual capital, charity, education, etc. Only through this, all the stakeholders will be satisfied with the development of the environment and its total offer of which value added depends.

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Social innovations in tourism industry are connected with diverse disciplines within the area (e.g., destination). This process of connecting different disciplines has emphasized three key dimensions to social innovation:

- innovations present new combinations of known factors;
- their practice involves cutting across organizational or disciplinary boundaries;
- they leave behind compelling new relationships between previously separated individuals and groups.

Figure 2: Social innovation processes in tourism



Source: author's adaptation according to van Cutsem, L. (2015). Social innovation. European tourism for all forum. <http://www.oits-isto.org/oits/files/resources/514.pdf> |

If it goes in the context of social innovation for the processes (figure 2) in case of the social entrepreneurship and social company in tourism, it is going for the organizational forms that are oriented in the non-profit part of the tourism industry excluding both for-profit and public organizations. Both organizational forms cooperate in contributing knowledge as a social capital value and enable development of the new social innovation processes in the field of tourism. As it can be seen in figure 2, social innovation in tourism describes the process by which new needs are developed in order to deliver better social outcomes.

As visible in figure 2, Social innovations start with the identification of social needs in the environment, followed by formation of a proposal and development of new solutions. Then follows the evaluation of the project, and after the positive evaluation, and finally scale up.

It is more important for tourism to focus on social innovations than on the social entrepreneurship because social innovations allow an analysis of the cultural relationship involved in the adoption of innovation. In the process of the adaptation of the innovation, consumers have the option to use new products in different ways that transform social practices associated with the product. In order to achieve this, consumers should be recognized as cultural agents who re-enact culture in the consumption process which can influence on the transforming practices associated with new products.

Social innovations became a part of the technological and/or organizational innovations after the year 2008 with the launch of a third industrial revolution. Technological breakthrough which enables the progress of (social) practices in tourism has changed the supply chain of tourist products. The online platforms have re-worked hospitality relationships and tourists get the opportunity to enact their agency and become cultural agents.

Sustainable model of sharing economy has an important influence on launching social innovation in tourism combined with the internet technologies. It is going for a social platform and mobile applications that allow things as sharing knowledge, products and services among consumers (C2C), business to customer (B2C) and business to business (B2B).

Commercial Internet Platform Airbnb and non-commercial platform Couchsurfing represent the best-known cases for the C2C. The Couchsurfing creates its community where consumers appear (especially if we consider that Couchsurfing is

a non-profitable service) as cultural agents. New digital technologies encourage the development of online networking as a new social practice.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the world is faced with the rapid penetration of digitalisation in human and business environment. New business models are formed constantly in the contemporary tourism industry, and all the participants are expected to know about new technological solutions. Bearing this in mind, in the following chapter the authors will provide some of the key facts why it is necessary to educate people about social innovation in the field of tourism

The technological development has an important influence on the changing business environment within tourism and hospitality industry. The educational providers should be aware that the ability of developing and acquiring the basic concepts of learning about using information and communication technology and computer literacy, play an important role in the personal development and economic and social development of the society.

Social innovation is a novel methodological approach which means “innovation in social relations”. By adopting such an approach, institutions offering programmes in tourism and hospitality should be equipped and aim to achieve the following:

- To support tourism and hospitality educators regarding the question how to position education about social innovation in social setting: cross learning and dialogue among researchers and field practitioners need to advance;
- To provide a robust conceptual framework for the on-going re-examination of social innovation within new digital business models (e.g., sharing economy) and social models (social economy);

Examination of the findings/results

Findings are based on two main outputs produced with the pilot actions:

1. Cooperation model for social innovation in the Belluno area

Goal of this Cooperation model is to define cooperation strategies useful to enhance social innovation in the Belluno area with the involvement of public and private actors.

The document collects the results of the activities carried out in this work package as a driver for the cooperation model and its recommendations

Main goal was to identify effective supporting tools for social innovation in the tourism field, identified as a potential driver for local economic diversification, currently based on industry, highly seasonalized tourism and a changing agricultural sector (Chamber of Commerce Treviso-Belluno Dolomites, 2018). The main questions that guided the work were: how can social innovation be an effective local development strategy? What model of cooperation between local actors could foster it? How could tourism and other related activities be a fertile field for social innovation?

The action, carried out between February and March 2021 has been aligned with the participatory intervention model envisaged by the entire +Resilient project, aimed at involving significant local actors in the design of community hubs for the enhancement of unused places and in the identification of areas accessible to the community for social, professional, recreational and cultural purposes. whose

The model identifies five key different actors to generate the 'quintuple helix governance', namely:

- public institutions,
- cognitive institutions
- private sector, already envisaged by the triple helix model
- civil society, both organized (associations)
- and non-organized (active citizens and social innovators).

The involvement of these actors entails that innovation generates institutions more inclusive and sustainable from a social, environmental and cultural perspective.

The following 8 priorities have arisen from the 2 focus groups carried out:

1. The transmission and enhancement of local and traditional knowledge;
2. The importance of investing in human capital through training;
3. The need to improve systems for listening to the territory in order to identify needs and resources;
4. Fostering forms of collaboration among local players;
5. Building multi-sector supply chains;
6. To encourage local players to participate in building databases;
7. To make local actors competent in open data analysis;
8. To develop innovative and sustainable positioning strategies.

In order to achieve an impact on the policy design, the solution seems to be a multilevel

collaborative governance.

A first kind of intervention suggests the creation of useful contexts for building trust and mutual commitment among the actors actively involved in local governance collaboration.

A second kind of intervention suggests proceeding incrementally from the existing small disconnected networks and then including new participants in a thoughtful way to limit their exposure to risks.

Both the two strategies could be adopted together to strengthen mutual commitment among parties, minimize uncertainty and increase the likelihood of successful outcomes

2. User Manual to cooperate for tourism economics enhanced by digital transformation and “circular” strategies

Goal of this Manual is to support SMEs in their innovation process paying attention mainly to the opportunities of digitalisation and circular principles to enhance and transform the touristic sector.

Today it is more necessary than ever to rethink and set up a model that allows to fill the gaps and overcome the existing limits, offer a framework of stable and constant interventions over time, consolidate and enrich know-how and skills.

The model to be defined and adopted should be based on three key factors: clarity, speed and competition.

These are three unavoidable aspects in order to define political and entrepreneurial strategies that affect the dynamics of growth and development of the country (and of the single territories) in order to delineate instruments tailored for the innovation processes of the enterprises.

The Manual has been organized in three sections, namely:

- Short introduction to Innovation managed at public and private level
- Tools to support enterprise innovation
- Green Deal and digitalisation for a new tourism economy

The short introduction highlights the need of a route change in the SMEs innovation process expecting active involvement of public and private actors in a complementary approach.

Some tools that can facilitate the innovation process or the creation of a business itself are introduced; there are tools created at national or European level, which can drive the company through the development of its business idea, to identify the most appropriate "partners" for business development or to identify the most useful tools for each innovation step.

There are national and international platforms and networks that can support transformation processes enhancing digitalisation and business sustainability, the guide mentioned some of them, namely:

- Platforms and networks for cooperation and innovation
- Cloud computing platforms
- Web portals for business services

According to the World Tourism Organization, "Sustainable tourism development responds to

the needs of tourists and the regions that welcome them, while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It must therefore result in the integrated management of all resources to meet economic, aesthetic and social needs, while preserving cultural integrity, ecosystems, biodiversity and basic living conditions."

To pursue such a goal the digitalisation seems to be an essential ally for a new economy of tourism as a leverage for a territorial change and new economic perspectives.

Policy Recommendations

Building on the findings, some general policy recommendations are presented:

1. Local and regional strategy plans shall aim at the transmission and enhancement of local and traditional knowledge; the intangible cultural heritage assets connected with the territory (dolomite areas, for example) are of added value for the enhancement of the tourist sector and its sustainable approach.
2. The importance of investing in human capital through training; Regional and local policies and actions plans need to increase the attitude to enhance competence and skills on the "core" sectors of the mountain economy, among which tourism is the pillar. Particularly, it is important to develop necessary training courses aiming at social inclusion and increasing the social responsibility by operators, employees and entrepreneurs; the Italian legislation is on progress on this point and the support provided to enterprises and young entrepreneurs goes in this direction, but need the full support of the public sector.
3. The need to improve systems for listening to the territory in order to identify needs and resources; social innovation plans connected with tourism needs to be developed and implemented particularly considering opportunities and events under development (Sky Olympics games, for example)
4. Fostering forms of collaboration among local players; networking actions need to be improved and supported. The enforcement of local committee on tourism, entrepreneurs and social assistance needs to be further implemented and increased. Additionally, the relationship between local and regional dimension of policies, action plans and financial instruments is to be encouraged and supported.
5. Building multi-sector supply chains; intermediary organization and business support organization need to cooperate with public and private actors to better organize local supply chain, to support their attitude to inclusion and to enhance their capacity to implement social responsibility and sustainable activities, mainly considering the provision of services addressed to different targets of reference
6. To encourage local players to participate in building databases; platforms have been implemented and need to be supported, particularly to enhance the matching between labor opportunities offered to disadvantaged persons and the tourist sector.
7. To make local actors competent in open data analysis; training courses, local activities and thematic workshop shall encourage the exploitation of open data to design new services, much more customer oriented and taking care of the emerging social and environmental

responsibility.

8. To develop innovative and sustainable positioning strategies; the new ERDF local plans (2021-27) should be an opportunity to identify relevant cooperation sectors, where local and regional authorities can dialogue to enhance the social dimension of tourism, encourage the start-ups of new tourist entrepreneurial initiative socially responsible and support the enforcement of the overall mountain ecosystem social attitude.